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THE DISINTEGRATION OF ROMANISM.

AN article appeared in the February number of this REVIEW, by Bishop B. J. McQuaid, the very title of which was little less than the death-warrant of modern civilization. It was entitled "The Decay of Protestantism," and it assures us that Protestantism "is dying." Now, whether Protestantism, as a religion, be true or false, it is unquestionably the dominant religion of all the progressive nations. And if religion, in some form or other, is "the salt of the earth," "the decay of Protestantism," and its approaching death, can mean nothing less than this: that modern civilization will soon become a putrid carcass, at once dead itself and death-dealing far and wide. But perhaps Bishop McQuaid may be mistaken; his wish may be father of his thought. For obviously he believes that, if Protestantism would only die, Romanism would come to life again. It would be the last and only refuge for all who are frightened of hell, and who "do not care to make a mistake in what concerns eternity." The only alternative then remaining would be infidelity or Romanism; and, Protestantism being dead, who would accept Infidelity?

But what is Protestantism? Before a coroner's inquest can investigate the causes of a death, there must be an actual dead body for their inspection. Before a physician can offer a prognosis, there must be an actual patient whose chance of recovery he endeavors to estimate. We cannot tell whether Protestantism "is dying" unless we can really examine it, feel its pulse, ascertain its temperature, and all that sort of thing. But, unfortunately, Bishop McQuaid gives us no definition of Protestantism; or, rather, he implies and employs two different and mutually exclusive definitions. First, Protestantism is a temper of mind, a way of regarding religion, the assertion of the right of private judgment; then it is a definite system, or a number of

definite systems, of religious doctrine and discipline—a number of concrete societies (for we may not call them “churches”), such as the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and the like. Now, if Protestantism in this latter sense is decaying, it can only be because Protestantism, in the former sense, is flourishing. The terrific solvent is melting the very vessel in which it is contained. Indeed, it is the very object of Bishop McQuaid’s article to prove this.

We must assume, then, that he means by Protestantism the various concrete societies of persons professing to be Christians, which have broken away from the authority, lawful or usurped, of the Bishop of Rome. And he tries to prove that they are decaying by tendering what seems to him conclusive evidence that their creeds, their church government and ministry, and their church membership, are decaying. Let us, then, first inquire what is meant by the decay of a creed. Here, again, Bishop McQuaid is hopelessly inexact; for by the decay of a creed he does not mean that the creed itself has been altered, but that a considerable number of persons have ceased, in a greater or less degree, to believe it. The creed, for instance, of the Anglican Church, and of its daughter, the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, has undergone no change whatever since the accession of Elizabeth. No doubt there may have been considerable change in popular religious opinion; but it may very reasonably be doubted whether this does not consist in an enlargement as much as in a relaxation of the authorized standards. The popular opinion, for instance, as to the inspiration of the writers of Holy Scripture, is very far indeed in excess of any dogmatic statement in the Thirty-nine Articles and the Homilies. And even what may be considered Latitudinarianism, or Liberalism, consists not in the denial of the creeds, but in a freer exposition of them. Similarly, no Presbyterian or Methodist would acknowledge that he had departed from the standards of his church, but would claim that he was more reasonably and correctly interpreting them.

In like manner we can perceive no decay in the government or ministry of the different Protestant bodies. Such a decay could only possibly have taken place in the Episcopal Churches, all of which claim to possess an Apostolical succession, and the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons. But these orders, also, like the creeds, are exactly what they were in the

reign of Henry the Eighth. Individual clergymen, indeed, may under-estimate or over-estimate the authority which has been conferred upon them; but that authority is perfectly definite, whether they understand it or not. Nor is there any real decay in the discipline of Protestant societies. They have the power to exclude from their communion both heretics and evil-livers, and they probably exercise that power quite as frequently as do the Roman Catholic clergy. They cannot do more than this, and fortunately, throughout almost the whole of the civilized world at the present day, the power of the Roman clergy is equally limited. The fact is, that the apparent decay of discipline, whether within or beyond the Roman obedience, is to be explained by the fact that both heretics and evil-doers excommunicate themselves. It is idle to waste bell, book, and candle upon a man who is equally indifferent to your curse and your benediction. As to the "membership" of the various Protestant bodies, nothing is more easily demonstrable than that their numbers are rapidly increasing.

But I am very little concerned either with the accuracy, or inaccuracy, of Bishop McQuaid's statements. For the sake of argument, I will admit them; and I think I can easily show that the Bishop has entirely failed to perceive their true significance. He argues that Protestantism is a God-forsaken delusion, because it is continually splitting up into new sects; removing its ancient landmarks, if anything Protestant can be ancient; and changing, to suit the spirit of the age, the very foundations of its faith. And it altogether escapes his attention, not only that a similar disintegration is in progress within the Roman Church itself, but that that church is as really responsible for the whole of Protestantism as the Anglican Church is for non-conformity, or the various Christian sects for infidelity and agnosticism. Bishop McQuaid, of course, believes that the Roman Church is the only true church; that it has existed from the time of the Apostles, and also—for this is implied in the very structure of his argument—that one sure proof of its being the true church is the fact that it does not split into sects, that its creed remains unchanged, and that its ministry and government are unaltered. Of course, it is perfectly obvious that, in one sense, no Christian body whatever breaks up into sects; the sects break off from it; and though its numbers may be thus diminished, it claims to be the original body still. But this is by

no means what Bishop McQuaid means by the decay of Protestantism. He argues that Protestantism has decayed because, from the original bodies, such as Anglicanism and Lutheranism, sects have been continually breaking off. And he seems to forget that this is exactly what has been happening to the Christian Church from the very beginning; and that it is this which happened, on the largest possible scale, to the Roman Church itself at the time of the Reformation. He tells us, with the grossest possible exaggeration, that about three hundred years ago men had definite beliefs with regard to God and eternity. "They then believed in supernatural truths and in mysteries. They also believed in a divinely established authority to guide men in all questions of faith and morals." Just as if in the course of the Church's history there had been no Arians or Pelagians, no Montanists or Donatists, no great schism between the East and West. But let us also shut our eyes to these significant facts, alike undeniable and undenied. Let us admit that in the sixteenth century there was only one church, one creed, one divinely constituted and universally recognized guiding authority.

We may go very much farther. This one church was at that time in possession, not only of all the spiritual forces which belong to a spiritual body, but also of all the physical force which belonged to all the states of Europe. Not only was this physical force at its command, but the Church habitually made use of it with the most unrelenting cruelty. She had the absolute monopoly of education; the censorship of books; control, not only over the speculative opinions, but over the practical morality, of the whole population of Europe. She had her learned doctors, her parish priests, her religious orders, her confessors in every household; she had every possible facility for maintaining her authority by instruction and persuasion; and if, in spite of this, any of her children stumbled into error, even in the labyrinth of the darkest mysteries, she could burn them to a cinder, and never hesitated to do it. She had the field all to herself; and in those days heresy was regarded as a more revolting crime than murder or adultery. And what, as an undisputed fact of history, was the outcome of all this? It was that Romanism "decayed" into the innumerable sects of Protestants with which, at this very hour, the world is either cursed

or blessed. Her truth, if she possessed the truth, became inoperative; her discipline, though enforced by the secular arm, became powerless. And if infidelity and agnosticism are the legitimate children of Protestantism, then Protestantism itself, with all its children, legitimate and bastards, is the child of Rome. It is idle to pretend that she had disinherited and disowned them. So does Anglicanism disown the Methodists, and the Methodists the infidels. The fact remains that at the time of the Reformation she lost, and has never since regained, by far the largest part of the population of all the most progressive and most civilized nations of Europe. And even where she retains a nominal supremacy, it is a supremacy more disgraceful than honorable. That country in Europe which most nearly corresponds to the whole of Europe at the time of the Reformation, is Spain. The national church of Spain is Roman Catholic, and the whole population, with the exception of sixty thousand persons, adhere to the Roman Catholic faith. Any Protestant worship must be strictly in private, and every public announcement of Protestantism is strictly forbidden. The population of Spain is rather more than sixteen and a half millions; and out of this number, at the last general census, there were 11,800,000 persons who could neither read nor write. France, again, is nominally Catholic; is she truly religious? Does she love the Church? Does she encourage "religious" orders, or the accumulation of church property? Does she tolerate the Jesuits, or trust the education of the young to the Roman priesthood? And if infidelity be spreading, whether as the result of Protestantism or of Romish superstition, what is the Roman Church for, if it be not to repress infidelity and win unbelievers to the truth? What, then, is her contribution to the defence of Christianity or of Theism? By way of commending the truth to puzzled intellects and bewildered consciences, she has invented, within the memory of all of us, the most grotesque caricature of Christianity which human ingenuity could devise; and required men to believe, on peril of damnation, what every student of history knows to be demonstrably false. She does not "with meekness instruct those who oppose themselves," try to lessen their difficulties, and convince their reason; but she tells them that, as they will not believe in the Christianity of the Apostles, they must accept in addition the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and the

Infallibility of the Pope, or go to the devil. Alas ! the pity of it is that, on these terms, the great majority of educated men would rather go to the devil than to the Church !

But this brings me to notice that not only has Romanism "decayed in its membership,"—by the great loss she sustained at the Reformation, by the recent secession of the Old Catholics, and by the growing indifference and infidelity of her nominal adherents throughout the continent of Europe,—but she is "decaying" more fatally still from within, by altering her "creeds," and her "government and discipline." And by altering her creeds I do not mean—which is all that Bishop McQuaid can charge against Protestants—that multitudes of her members hold large portions of her creeds in abeyance, or explain them away ; but that she has made positive and very serious additions to the creeds themselves ; so that the very conditions of salvation within the Roman Church are no longer what they were fifty years ago. And not only has the substance of the creeds been altered,—as, *e. g.*, by the addition of the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and the Infallibility of the Pope,—but the change has been made in such a manner, and on such grounds, that the whole foundation of the faith has been changed. In a word, the whole historical continuity of the Roman Church has been broken. Her doctrine and discipline no longer rest either on scripture or on tradition, or on both of them put together, but on the personal, official infallibility of the Bishop of Rome. It is assumed, indeed, that he will be protected by the divine *Assistentia* from contradicting the Scriptures or the already defined dogmas of the Church. But this is a bare assumption ; and in every case he is his own judge, and can infallibly determine either that a new definition does not in fact contradict, but only develops or modifies existing doctrines ; or that there was some defect in their definition ; or that, in spite of formal regularity, they are nevertheless untrue. Indeed, the dogma of Papal Infallibility as against the Infallibility of the Church was demanded for this very purpose : that the Church might be saved the appeal to history, or the long and doubtful discussions of an Œcumenical Synod, and be enabled to decide off-hand, by an ever-available oracle, even upon the most mysterious and difficult subjects. In view of the ever-increasing infidelity which characterizes this age, and against which the Church of Rome is utterly powerless, it was hoped and expected that her

real weakness could be concealed by a bolder assertion of strength; that doctrines which are no longer believed or believable would somehow become credible and acceptable, if they were repeated in a mysterious jargon from some sacred oracle; that the mere claim of infallibility would, by its sheer audacity, compel conviction. But in order that this might be accomplished it was necessary to assume the Papal infallibility, and to act upon it, before its formal definition, and for the purpose of securing that definition. For this purpose the Vatican Synod was convoked, coerced, enslaved, and stultified. The Vatican Synod is the suicide of the Roman Church.

The true and complete history of that spurious council has yet to be written; and when it appears it will be widely different from the dull fiction composed by that restless Cardinal to whom the definition of Infallibility is mainly due. But enough is known already to prove the enormous change that has taken place both in the doctrine and discipline of the Roman Church. Most instructive, for instance, as coming from within the council, and written by one who himself voted for the Infallibility, and cannot be even accused of heresy, is "Eight Months at Rome during the Vatican Council"—a work known, in spite of partial disclaimers, to have been written by Cardinal Nobili-Vitelleschi, Bishop of Osimo, "raised to the Archbishopric of Seleucia, and to the purple, after the Vatican Council, by Pius IX." * This impartial and orthodox chronicler of events which occurred under his own most careful observation, giving evidence, agreeing with, and confirming a mass of similar evidence from other and various sources, has produced a work of singular value. He exposes the hollow sham from every side and in every way. Of whom was the council composed? Who were those hundreds of bishops who there revolutionized the doctrine and discipline of the Church? Were they bishops of real dioceses; or did they represent, even when they had real dioceses, whole cities or provinces of genuine Catholics? Does the Bishop of Chicago represent a Roman Catholic Chicago, or the restless Manning a Roman Catholic Westminster? To say nothing of bishops *in partibus*, as many as three hundred were the guests of the Pope, and so put under a strong pressure not to go against his wishes. But every kind of pressure was put upon

* See an admirable account of this work in "The Contemporary Review," January, 1877, by Dr. Littledale.

the council. There was no freedom of discussion, nor fullness of debate. In his review of Vitelleschi's book, and on Vitelleschi's authority, Dr. Littledale says:

"That the Pope was ready and willing to proceed to personal violence against the opposition is established by the arrest and imprisonment of an Armenian vicar-general for blaming two other prelates for undue servility toward Rome, and it was only the prompt interference of the Turkish Minister which secured his release. 'Quirinus' gives an additional circumstance or two here,—first, that the French embassy refused its aid, and next, that the Cardinal Secretary of State replied to the first Turkish remonstrance, that all Catholic priests, when at Rome, lost their national rights, became simply subjects of the Pope, and were under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition alone. It is most important to bear this fact in mind when passing judgment on the timorous flight of opposition bishops a little later, when the Infallibilist victory was assured, since they had private warning from well-wishers of Vitelleschi's stamp that punitive measures were being prepared for them, and perhaps not imprisonment only, but a more extreme penalty for disobedience, such as overtook Cardinal Andrea."

Not only was the Vatican Synod "managed," with utter disregard of the most ancient precedents, in such a way as to deprive its canons and decrees of all general validity, but those decrees, when they were produced, wholly revolutionized the "government and ministry" of the Roman Church. Bishop McQuaid makes himself merry with the timid uncertainty as to the nature and extent of their authority, expressed by some of the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, at a recent congress in Richmond, Va.; and he argues from this a "decay" in the ministry of that church. But the decay, such as it was, was not in the ministry, but in the private opinion of a few individuals as to the nature of that ministry. But the Vatican synod has annihilated—except in name—the whole Episcopate of the Roman Church. Not a single bishop of that church any longer resembles in the least degree St. Cyprian or St. Augustine. Every one of them is the mere creation and curate and slave of the Pope. What bishop now would dare to write to Leo XIII. as St. Cyprian wrote to the then Bishop of Rome, or would escape excommunication if he did?

So much for organic changes, introduced by recognized authority—change of "creed," by new dogmas, declared to be necessary to salvation; changes in "government and ministry," by the enslavement and virtual abolition of the Episcopate. There is nothing in the slightest degree corresponding to this in

the history of Protestantism. Bishop McQuaid knows that, and he therefore adduces varieties of private opinion—the High Church, Low Church, Broad Church—as evidence of a decaying creed. Is there then nothing of that kind in Romanism? Are there no “minimizers” there?

The Romish revival in England is due, at bottom, almost exclusively to two individuals, Newman and Manning; both cardinals, both entitled to speak with high authority, but both, also, so far private individuals that they cannot commit the Roman Church to any opinion or confident belief that they may think proper to express. They are to the Roman Church what, for instance, Maurice and Pusey are—or alas! were—to the Anglican Church. Their differences of opinions, if they do differ, all prove a “decay of creed,” exactly in the same way as such “decay” is proved by the co-existence of our High and Broad Church parties or schools in the Episcopal churches of England and America. Everybody knows that Cardinal Manning is a Papist of the Papists, the very type of an Ultramontane, the great patron and promoter of those very extravagances of Mariolatry and Infallibility which have rendered all hopes of re-union with the Roman Church monstrous and impossible. He out-herods Herod. Here is the testimony of Cardinal Vitelleschi:

“The persistence of the Archbishop of Westminster was, perhaps, the logical result of his own antecedents. Having been a priest and a Protestant at the outset of his career, he knew his own religion from within and not from without, and the Catholic religion from without and not from within. He was well acquainted with the many divisions and subdivisions of Protestantism, and admired the majestic unity of Catholicism. He did not appreciate the good effects of allowing a moderate degree of liberty and the constant exercise of the conscience and reasoning powers; neither did he understand the dangers arising from the excessive authority exercised by united Catholicism. In fact, he was enamored of the principle of authority as the slave adores the idea of liberty; and the want of discrimination and of real Catholic perceptions in his dealings with the council was a matter of reproach to him even by the most faithful and devout clergy at Rome.”

And again:

“History is bound to award to the author and originator of every work the praise or blame which is due to him. All must remember the part taken by the Fathers of the ‘*Civiltà Cattolica*’ and Monsignor Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, in promoting the dogma of the personal infallibility of the Pope, and all know it was their mind and their will that carried it.”

Now Newman is to Manning what the "Imitation of Christ" is to the "Glories of Mary." Let us see, then, what "decay of creed" there is — according to Bishop McQuaid's test — in the Church of Rome, as proved in such well-known and conspicuous examples as the two English cardinals. Manning we know; let us hear Newman.

And first as to the *cultus* of the Virgin Mary. Of course Cardinal Newman justifies that *cultus*. But as Mr. Maurice was accused of "explaining away" the doctrine of the Atonement, or of Eternal Punishment, so Newman is accused of *minimizing*. Indeed, he is so little in sympathy with the hideous extravagances of blasphemy which are the delight of Cardinal Manning, that, until he read some specimens of them in Pusey's "Eirenicon," he did not know of their existence. Pusey's specimens were all duly authenticated; and, in fact, the worst of all these idolatrous extravagances are not only permitted, but largely *indulged*. Here is Dr. Newman's reply to Dr. Pusey ("Difficulties of Anglicanism," ii., 113–114):

"After such explanation, and with such authorities to clear my path, I put away from me, as you would wish, without any hesitation, as matters in which my heart and reason have no part (when taken in their literal and absolute sense, as any Protestant would naturally take them, and as the writers doubtless did not use them), such sentences and phrases as these: That the mercy of Mary is infinite; that God has resigned into her hands His omnipotence; that it is safer to seek her than to seek her Son; that the Blessed Virgin is superior to God; that our Lord is subject to her command; that His present disposition toward sinners, as well as His Father's, is to reject them, while the Blessed Mary takes His place as an advocate with Father and Son; that the saints are more ready to intercede with Jesus than Jesus with the Father; that Mary is the only refuge of those with whom God is angry; that Mary alone can obtain a Protestant's conversion; that it would have sufficed for the salvation of men if our Lord had died, not in order to obey His Father, but to defer to the decree of His Mother; that she rivals our Lord in being God's daughter, not by adoption, but by a kind of nature; that Christ fulfilled the office of Saviour by imitating her virtues; that as the Incarnate God bore the image of His Father, so he bore the image of His Mother; that redemption derived from Christ indeed its sufficiency, but from Mary its beauty and loveliness; that, as we are clothed with the merits of Christ, so we are clothed with the merits of Mary; that as He is Priest, in a like sense is she priestess; that His body and blood in the Eucharist are truly hers and appertain to her; that, as He is present and received therein, so is she present and received therein; that priests are ministers as of Christ, so of Mary; that elect souls are born of God and Mary; that the Holy Ghost brings into fruitfulness His action by her, producing in her and by her Jesus Christ in His members; that the kingdom of God in our souls, as our Lord

speaks, is really the kingdom of Mary in the soul; that she and the Holy Ghost produce in the soul extraordinary things; and that when the Holy Ghost finds Mary in a soul He flies there.

"Sentiments such as these I freely surrender to your animadversion; I never knew of them till I read your book, nor, as I think, do the vast majority of English Catholics know them. They seem to me like a bad dream. I could not have conceived them to be said. I know not to what authority to go for them,—to Scripture, or to the Fathers, or to the decrees of councils, or to the consent of schools, or to the tradition of the faithful, or to the Holy See, or to Reason."

We all know the part taken by Cardinal Manning in the Vatican Synod. That restless, conceited, haughty prelate was so far from waiting either for the guidance of Providence or of the "infallible" Head of the Church, that he "forced the hand" of the Holy Father himself; and was the chief agent in imposing upon the Roman Church a revolutionary dogma which her most learned bishops repudiated as, at the very least, inopportune, if not actually false. At the time of the secession of Dr. Döllinger and his party, it was foolishly and falsely rumored that Dr. Newman would join them. And here are his own words ("Difficulties of Anglicanism," ii., 298, 299):

"But the explanation of such reports about me is easy. They arise from forgetfulness on the part of those who spread them, that there are two sides to ecclesiastical acts, that right ends are often prosecuted by very unworthy means, and that, in consequence, those who, like myself, oppose a line of action are not necessarily opposed to the issue for which it has been adopted. Jacob gained by wrong means his destined blessing. 'All are not Israelites who are of Israel,' and there are partisans of Rome who have not the sanctity and wisdom of Rome herself.

"I am not referring to anything which took place within the walls of the council chambers; of that, of course, we know nothing; but, even though things occurred there which it is not pleasant to dwell upon, that would not at all affect, not by a hair's breadth, the validity of the resulting definition, as I shall presently show. What I felt deeply, and ever shall feel while life lasts, is the violence and cruelty of journals and other publications, which, taking, as they professed to do, the Catholic side, employed themselves by their rash language (though, of course, they did not mean it so) in unsettling the weak in faith, throwing back inquirers, and shocking the Protestant mind. Nor do I speak of publications only; a feeling was too prevalent in many places that no one could be true to God and His Church who had any pity on troubled souls, or any scruple of 'scandalizing those little ones who believe in' Christ, and of 'despising and destroying him for whom He died.'

"It was this most keen feeling which made me say, as I did continually, 'I will not believe that the Pope's infallibility will be defined, till defined it is.'"

Again he writes, after the definition of the dogma (Ibid. 325):

"Another ground for receiving the dogma, still not upon the direct authority of the council, or with acceptance of the validity of its act *per se*, is the consideration that our merciful Lord would not care so little for His elect people, the multitude of the faithful, as to allow their visible head, and such a large number of bishops, to lead them into error, and an error so serious, if an error. This consideration leads me to accept the doctrine as a dogma, indirectly indeed from the council, but not so much from a council as from the Pope and a very large number of bishops. The question is not whether they had a right to impose, or even were right in imposing, the dogma on the faithful; but whether, having done so, I have not an obligation to accept it, according to the maxim, 'Fieri non debuit, factum valet.'"

And then he proceeds to show how little was accomplished by the new definition.

But it is enough. If Protestantism is "decaying" because of a diminution of "its membership,"—which, as a matter of fact, can be entirely disproved,—*a fortiori*, must Romanism be "decaying," which has lost all Protestantism to begin with, and is honeycombed with infidelity and groveling superstition. If a change of "creed" be a sure token of coming death, what must be the moribund condition of that church which has not only added, within the memory of all of us, new articles of necessary belief, but has shifted the very foundation upon which all her doctrine and discipline rests? If vague private opinions about the nature of the ministry in the Protestant Episcopal churches prove "decay," what shall we say of the absorption of the whole Episcopate in a single See? If it is impossible for a church to live which embraces high and low and broad, a Pusey and a Maurice, what shall we say of a church which includes a Newman and a Manning? What Bishop McQuaid has proved, if he has proved anything, is the "decay," not of Protestantism, but of the Christian religion. For my own part, I am not in the least alarmed. Protestantism or no Protestantism, "God is over all, blessed for ever."

WILLIAM KIRKUS.